

**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Sorenson's Ranch School
410 North 100 East
P.O. Box 440219
Koosharem, Utah 84744-0219**

May 29, 2008



**Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
P.O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200**

**THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

Sorenson's Ranch School

**410 North 100 East
P.O. Box 440219
Koosharem, UT 84744-0219**

May 29, 2008

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

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FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, May 29, 2008, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Sorenson's Ranch School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the visiting team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Steve Church is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Sorenson's Ranch School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Sorenson's Ranch School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

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*Board of Regents Appointments

** CMAC Representative Appointment

7/25/2007

SORENSEN'S RANCH SCHOOL

OWNERSHIP

Owners of Record Shane Sorenson, Jill Sorenson, Carol Sorenson

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Shane SorensonPresident
Jill Sorenson..... Vice-President
Carol Sorenson..... Secretary/Treasurer

SORENSEN'S RANCH SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Steve Church Principal

Counseling/Therapy

Jody Brand Therapist/Group Facilitator
Wesley W. Craig, Ph.D Therapist
Christine Franks Clinical Secretary/Office Manager
Ross Franks Guidance Counselor
Vanya Hampton Clinical Secretary
Sharon Lopez Clinical Director/Substance Abuse Counselor
Joy Morris, Ph.D Therapist/Intern Supervisor
Dave Neslen Therapist
Elva Nielson Group Facilitator/Case Manager
Jana Torgerson Group Facilitator/Case Manager

Support Staff

Soco Alarcon Food Service
Layne Bagley Admissions Director
Lisa Bagley Accounts Payable Clerk
Phylliss Bagley Intake Coordinator/Case Manager
Linda Barr Administrative Secretary
Judy Fielding Medical Department Secretary
Etta Hart Food Service Supervisor
Jeff Hatch LPN/Medical Department Supervisor
Marlene Hatch Educational Secretary
Octavia Horton Disciplinarian/Case Manager/Beautician/Activity Staff
Lisa Jensen Housekeeping/Case Manager/Student Council Advisor
Holly McCulla Administrative Secretary
Linda Nebeker Human Resources Manager/Information Technology
Anne Sorenson Food Service
Bill Sorenson Ranch Supervisor/Work Projects
Colleen Sorenson Library Aide
Maxine Talbot Housekeeping/Case Manager
Mindy Talbot Accounts Receivable/Admissions
Tammy Turner Food Service
Vivian Youngkin Custodian

Faculty

James V. Bagley
Carol Anne Converse-Torgenson
Daryl Essey
Benjamin W. Gasser
Steven M. Nielson

Rhonda Robinson
Bradley Shaw
Tina Somers
Carol Sorenson

Instructional Assistants

Bonnie Church

Tevita Vakautakala

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Ted P. Lovato, Accreditation Consultant, Utah State Office of Education,
Northwest Association of Accredited Schools, Chairperson

Terry G. Ogborn, Principal, Millcreek High School, Washington School District

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

Sorenson's Ranch School is seeking continued accreditation by the Northwest Association of Accredited Schools (NAAS). NAAS is one of the premier American education accrediting agencies, and accredits over 1,800 public and private schools throughout the Northwest region of the United States and many other places in the world. The NAAS accreditation process establishes rigorous quality standards and validates the educational quality of schools through on-site reviews conducted by trained volunteer evaluators and consultants, as needed.

This document is the report of the evaluation team. The purpose of the on-site evaluation visit is to (1) validate the completion and accuracy of the school's self-study, (2) verify that the school meets the NAAS standards, (3) facilitate development and implementation of an effective school improvement plan, and (4) provide commendations and recommendations to enhance the school's quality.

Evaluation

The Utah State Office Education assembled a Visiting Team whose members have had extensive expertise in accreditation, school improvement, international education, and American education. The team members had graduate degrees in education and over 90 years of cumulative experience as educators and administrators.

The one-day evaluation was based on NAAS standards and quality indicators. Evaluation activities and methods used included review of the self-study materials, observations, and facilities. There were individual interviews of teachers, students and administrators. School records and documents were reviewed.

This report is prepared for the school to be used for its continuous improvement. Evaluation decisions were made by consensus; thus, ratings and evaluative commendations and recommendations were developed by the team and do not represent just one person's opinion.

An oral report highlighting the commendations and recommendations was presented to the administrator. This written report summarizes findings and offers commendations and recommendations. The school is encouraged to share the report with the school community, an advisory board, and appropriate authorities.

The report provides a specific judgment on whether each indicator of each standard is met. Whereas not all quality indicators under each standard must be fully met at the time of the review visit, the school must identify the needs and be working toward fully meeting each indicator.

This report includes ratings and findings, as well as commendations and recommendations. Ratings address the degree to which the school meets the standards and quality indicators. Findings are statements of fact that were observed or reported.

Commendations are areas that the team identified as strengths or that exceed expectations. It is important for the school to maintain those strong points because they contribute to overall quality. Recommendations refer to either the areas that need change or next steps for continuous improvement. Therefore, all schools receive recommendations. The number of recommendations in no way reflects the quality of the school.

SORENSEN'S RANCH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of Sorenson's Ranch School to enable students to experience academic success in a safe, sober and positive environment, with an emphasis on becoming responsible citizens.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- Conduct always matters.
- All students deserve a safe and sober learning environment.
- Commitment to the Continuous Improvement of the instructional craft.
- Students will be given an opportunity to learn and mature at an individualized pace.
- Learning is more effective when positive behavior has been promoted.
- Positive behavior, accountability, punctuality, appropriate dress and appearance, time management skills and a strong work ethic are all attributes of a responsible citizen.
- Participating in a mastery-learning program provides unique opportunities for academic success and enhances student's self-esteem.
- Patient dedication to student learning enables students to experience academic success.
- Students will be taught and evaluated using a variety of techniques and assessments.
- All personnel will model polite and ethical behavior.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

1. Personal and Social Responsibility:
Indicators:
 - a. Students assume responsibility for their conduct.
 - b. Students demonstrate honesty, act ethically, and show respect.
 - c. Students manage their behavior in the classroom.
 - d. Students will demonstrate self-discipline and self-motivation.
 - e. Students will set goals, evaluate progress, and ask for help when necessary.
2. Effective Communicator:
Indicators:
 - a. Students will write effectively using the three criteria for writing.
 - b. Students communicate with others in a respectful way.
 - c. Students will ask for help when needed.
 - d. Students will compose and present an oral presentation or Power Point presentation.
3. Life Long Learner:
Indicators:
 - a. Students organize resources and time effectively.
 - b. Students engage in activities for aesthetic enjoyment (including field trips and alternate activities).
 - c. Students express feelings evoked from aesthetic experiences (evaluation of field trips and other alternate activities).
 - d. Students will make progress towards returning to their correct grade level of credit.
 - e. Students learn about post-secondary school experience, including education, military or immediate work options.

Date of Visit: May 29, 2008

VISITING TEAM REPORT

SORENSEN'S RANCH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Sorenson's Ranch School is a co-ed residential treatment center that operates year round; students may enroll at any time during the year. The student body is made up of 120 students from all parts of the United States, and occasionally students come from outside the country. The average length of stay is 12 months, with some students staying for as little as six months and some for as long as two years.

The students arrive at Sorenson's Ranch School with a variety of issues and symptoms, including low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, reactive attachment disorder, or a number of other problems. Any of the aforementioned behaviors can contribute to problems in school, at home, with substance abuse, etc. The behavior modification element of the Sorenson's Ranch School program helps students to learn characteristics of responsible citizenship and is based on a consistent point and level system. A student becomes eligible for level advancement by maintaining a predetermined weekly point average for a certain number of weeks.

The students are afforded many learning opportunities and activities to enrich their lives. This private school uses a mastery-based, individualized educational program rooted in Utah's Core Curriculum. The campus is made up of several buildings, including classrooms, residential cabins, a gymnasium, stables, a full library, and a working ranch. Sorenson's Ranch School is located on hundreds of acres in a beautiful mountain and meadow setting. The very rural small town of Koosharem, Utah is located nearby.

a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?

The educational and therapeutic staff of Sorenson's Ranch School found that the process of accreditation is an ongoing activity, and they are committed to overall school improvement on behalf of this unique, at-risk student population. The entire staff is committed to continuous improvement and "to the realization of our goals," as stated in the self-study document.

b) What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?

The entire school staff should continue to investigate ways for students to be disciplined in a caring and positive manner. Even though the staff must carefully design and operate a program needing close supervision so that students cannot continue with self-destructive behaviors, students interviewed complained that some of the Disciplinary Staff could be very negative in their approach to

students who have not yet reached the school's goal of developing "an internal value system" for each student.

The self-study document stated that efforts are being made to improve national and state standardized test results by the use "of better teaching practices and the improvement of test-taking skills." The Visiting Teams feels this is a worthy consideration for future growth, and found evidence that SAT/ACT test-taking opportunities are available to students.

- c) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

The staff of Sorenson's Ranch School firmly believes that students provided with a caring atmosphere, high-quality instruction, and opportunities to experience success will not only accept responsibility for their individual learning, but enjoy it as well. The school's self-study accurately reflects the school's current strengths and limitations. As a result of the self-study, the school has produced the widely known motto "Conduct Always Matters," and all students are expected to live by this worthwhile principle. The staff members found that the self-study assisted them in helping students realize that positive self-esteem and appropriate behavior in a drug-free environment are vital to the process of leading students to responsible citizenship and academic success.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- Students expressed a need for additional educational resources, beyond just the textbook, to assist them with further educational acquisition and mastery. An inquiry should be conducted into why students feel this way.
- Seek ways for teachers and the guidance counselor to be more available to students beyond the classroom time allocation. Students are seeking more encouragement from teachers for the work being done in the classroom (Student Survey 2007).

CHAPTER 2: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

The following represents the Visiting Team's renderings on the Core Standards for Accreditation and whether in their collective judgment each respective indicator is being substantially met.

1. MISSION, BELIEFS, AND DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

Guiding Principle: The school's mission statement describes the essence of what the school as a

community of learners is seeking to achieve. The desired results for student learning are based on and drawn from the school's mission statement. These expectations are the fundamental goals by which the school continually assesses the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. Every component of the school must focus on enabling all students to achieve the school's desired results for student learning.

- 1.1 The school's mission statement and desired results for student learning (DRSLs) are developed by the school and are approved and supported by the professional staff and any other school-wide governing organization.

Substantially Met

- 1.2 The school's mission statement and beliefs represent the school's fundamental values and beliefs about student learning.

Substantially Met

- 1.3 The school defines school-wide academic, civic, and social learning expectations that are measurable, reflect the school's mission and beliefs, and are consistent with and reinforce Utah's *Life Skills: A Guide to Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions for Success* and each Core Curriculum's intended learning outcomes.

Substantially Met

- 1.4 For each academic expectation of the mission, the school has a targeted level of successful achievement identified in an indicator.

Partially Met

More effort is needed with overall assessment strategies so that school personnel can tell whether targeted levels of achievement are being met.

- 1.5 The school uses indicators to assess the school's progress in achieving school-wide civic, where applicable, and social expectations.

Partially Met

See 1.4 above.

- 1.6 The school's mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs guide the procedures, policies, and decisions of the school and are evident in the culture of the school.

Substantially Met

- 1.7 The school regularly reviews its mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs using a variety of data to ensure that they reflect student needs, community expectations, the district/governing body mission, and state and national standards, as applicable.

Partially Met

See 1.4 above.

Comments of the Visiting Team – Mission, Beliefs, and DRSLs Standard

Sorenson's Ranch School should make an effort to develop school-wide assessments for

academic, civic and social expectations that align and support the school's mission beliefs and DRSLs.

See comments above under specific indicators.

2. CURRICULUM

Guiding Principle: The curriculum, including coursework, co-curricular activities, and other school-approved educational experiences, is the school's formal plan to fulfill its mission and desired results for student learning. The curriculum links the school's beliefs, its desired results for student learning, and its instructional practices. The strength of that link is dependent upon the commitment and involvement of the professional staff to a comprehensive, ongoing review of the curriculum.

- 2.1 Each curriculum area identifies those school-wide academic expectations for which it is responsible.

Substantially Met

- 2.2 The curriculum is aligned with the school-wide academic expectations and ensures that all students have sufficient opportunity to achieve each of those expectations.

Substantially Met

- 2.3 The written curriculum:

- a. Prescribes content that aligns with the Utah State Core Curriculum.

Substantially Met

- b. Integrates relevant school-wide learning expectations reflecting the *Utah Life Skills: A guide to Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions for Success*.

Substantially Met

- c. Identifies course-specific intended learning outcomes.

Partially Met

- d. Suggests instructional strategies.

Partially Met

- e. Suggests assessment techniques, including the use of school-wide expectations for student learning.

Partially Met

Sorenson's Ranch School educators need to continually work on assessment strategies leading to effective assessment methods to gauge students' academic growth.

- 2.4 The curriculum engages all students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking, as well as providing opportunities for the authentic application of knowledge and skills.

Partially Met

It is evident to the Visiting Team that this unique at-risk student population needs curriculum suited to their individual needs. On the day of the visit very little inquiry, problem-solving, or higher-order thinking was observed.

- 2.5 The curriculum is appropriately integrated and emphasizes depth of understanding over breadth of coverage.
Substantially Met
- 2.6 The school provides opportunities for all students to extend learning beyond the normal course offerings and the school campus.
Substantially Met
- 2.7 There is effective curricular coordination and articulation between and among all academic areas within the school and the student's home school/district.
Substantially Met
- 2.8 A record that documents the results of all students' performance is maintained.
Partially Met
- School leaders admit that the school could do a better, more efficient job assessing students' overall academic performance.*
- 2.9 The school has a written policy statement concerning the selection of educational materials.
Substantially Met
- 2.10 The instructional materials are selected to support the specific objectives of the individual courses as well as the school's overall mission and goals.
Substantially Met
- 2.11 The materials provided to the students are adequate to meet the course objectives.
Substantially Met
- 2.12 The reading level of the materials is appropriate to the reading-level competence of the students.
Substantially Met
- 2.13 The materials are up to date.
Substantially Met
- 2.14 Adequate provisions are made for the prompt delivery and return of instructional materials, lessons, and examinations to and from the students.
Substantially Met
- 2.15 Lessons and examinations are graded promptly and the results communicated to the students and their parents/guardians.
Substantially Met
- 2.16 Student (and parent/guardian) inquiries are answered promptly and satisfactorily.
Substantially Met
- 2.17 The procedures for granting credit and/or for determining progress toward

graduation are consistent with the school's stated purposes.

Substantially Met

- 2.18 The procedures for granting credit are in writing and are available to enrolled students.

Substantially Met

- 2.19 Instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, staffing levels, and the resources of the library/media center are sufficient to allow for the effective implementation of the curriculum.

Substantially Met

- 2.20 The professional staff is actively involved in the ongoing development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum based on assessments of student performance in achieving the school's academic expectations and course-specific learning goals.

Partially Met

See comment for 2.3 above.

- 2.21 The school commits sufficient time, financial resources, and personnel to the development, evaluation, and revision of curriculum.

Partially Met

There is a need for the ownership to develop an ongoing, consistent annual budget so school leaders can plan on any and all curriculum revisions as needed, including the acquisition of updated educational material.

- 2.22 Professional development activities support the development and implementation of the curriculum.

Substantially Met

- 2.23 The program of studies meets the requirements of the state, ministry, or parent organization, as applicable.

Substantially Met

- 2.24 The curriculum is adapted to meet individual student learning needs.

Substantially Met

- 2.25 The students are aware of the curriculum being taught and are appropriately involved.

Substantially Met

Utah-Specific Indicators—Curriculum Standard

- 2.26 The curriculum meets the Utah graduation and credit requirements and all courses align to, meet or exceed Utah State Core Curricula in accordance with Board Rule R277-705.

Substantially Met

2.27 Rules and policy that require parent or guardian notification are followed.
Substantially Met

2.28 The curriculum includes patriotic education as outlined in Board Rule R277-475-3.*
Not Applicable

* Does not necessarily apply to non-public schools.

Comments of the Visiting Team—Curriculum Standard

See comments above regarding individual indicators.

3. INSTRUCTION

Guiding Principle: The quality of instruction in a school is the single most important factor affecting the quality of student learning, the achievement of desired results for student learning, the delivery of the curriculum, and the assessment of student progress. Instructional practices must be grounded in the school's mission, beliefs, and desired results for student learning, supported by research in best practices, and refined and improved based on identified student needs. Teachers are expected to be reflective about their instructional strategies and to collaborate with their colleagues about instruction and student learning.

3.1 Instructional strategies and practices are consistent with the school's stated mission, beliefs, and DRSLs.
Substantially Met

3.2 Teachers use a variety of instructional strategies to:

- a. Personalize instruction by providing concrete examples.
Substantially Met
- b. Make connections across disciplines by linking examples to other subjects.
Partially Met
There is a need for greater teacher and subject collaboration.
- c. Engage students as learners by using a variety of strategies.
Substantially Met
- d. Engage students as self-directed learners by providing opportunities for problem-solving.
Substantially Met
- e. Involve students in higher-order thinking.
Partially Met
On the day of the visit, the Visiting Team failed to observe higher-order thinking practices by students, however, low student/teacher ratios and engaged teaching techniques with self-paced curricula provide ample opportunities for this to occur.
- f. Provide opportunities for students to apply knowledge or skills.
Substantially Met
- g. Promote student self-assessment and self-reflection of what has been taught.
Substantially Met

- h. Recognize diversity, multiculturalism, individual differences, and other prevalent, unique characteristics of the student population.

Substantially Met

- 3.3 Teachers use feedback from a variety of sources, including other teachers, students, supervisors and parents, as a means of improving instruction.

Partially Met

There was no evidence of what kind of feedback, if any, was used to improve instruction.

- 3.4 Teachers are proficient in their content area, knowledgeable about current research on effective instructional approaches, and reflective about their own practices. (See 6.5 for reporting licensing and endorsements.)

Partially Met

Not all teachers are licensed and endorsed in subject areas taught, but the principal has made this a high priority.

- 3.5 Analysis of instructional strategies is a significant part of the professional culture of the school.

Partially Met

There is a greater need for the teachers to improve their instructional process continually, as outlined in the school's action plan.

- 3.6 Technology is integrated into and supportive of teaching and learning.

Substantially Met

- 3.7 Library information services are available to students and faculty members, and are utilized to improve teaching and learning.

Substantially Met

- 3.8 The school's professional development program is guided by identified instructional needs, and provides opportunities for teachers to develop and improve their instructional strategies.

Substantially Met

- 3.9 Teacher supervision and evaluation processes are used to improve instruction in order to meet the needs of all students.

Substantially Met

Utah-Specific Indicator—Instruction Standard

- 3.10 Instructional time is allocated and protected to support student learning.

Substantially Met

- 3.11 The teaching and learning program focuses on and utilizes educationally accepted best practices.

Partially Met

See 3.5 above.

Comments of the Visiting Team—Instruction Standard

There appears to be a need for an organized plan for teacher professional development to improve instructional practices.

See comments and recommendations under specific indicators above.

4. ASSESSMENT

Guiding Principle: Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Its purpose is to inform students regarding their learning progress and teachers regarding ways to adjust the curriculum and instruction to respond effectively to the learning needs of students. Further, it communicates to the parents the progress of students in achieving the school's expectations for student learning, as well as course-specific learning goals. Assessment results must be continually analyzed to improve curriculum and instruction.

- 4.1 The school has a process to assess both school-wide and individual student progress in achieving the academic expectations of the mission.

Partially Met

There seems to be no process established to assess progress in achieving school-wide expectations. See comments at the conclusion of the standard.

- 4.2 The school's professional staff uses data (climate survey, empirical, etc.) to assess the school success in achieving its civic and social expectations.

Partially Met

See 4.1 above and comments at conclusion of standard.

- 4.3 Teachers clarify for students the relevant school-wide academic expectations and course-specific learning goals that will be assessed.

Substantially Met

- 4.4 Teachers base classroom assessment of student learning on school-wide and course-specific indicators for intended learning outcomes.

Partially Met

See 4.1 above and comments at conclusion of standard.

- 4.5 Teachers use varied assessment strategies to determine student knowledge, skills, and competencies and to assess student growth over time.
Substantially Met
- 4.6 Teachers meet collaboratively to discuss and share student work and the results of student assessments for the purposes of revising the curriculum and improving instructional strategies.
Partially Met
- See 4.1 above and comments at conclusion of standard.*
- 4.7 The school's professional development program provides opportunities for teachers to collaborate in developing a broad range of assessment strategies.
Partially Met
- 4.8 The school's professional staff communicates individual student progress in achieving school-wide academic expectations to students and their families.
Substantially Met
- 4.9 Results and analysis of academic assessment are used to drive curriculum and instruction.
Partially Met
- See 4.1 above and comments at conclusion of standard.*
- 4.10 A record that documents the results of all student performance is maintained.
Substantially Met

Utah-Specific Indicators—Assessment Standard

- 4.11 Teachers receive and use the results of standardized assessments in a timely manner to facilitate and improve instruction. (For public school this would include the CRTs, Iowa Test, and UBSCT results.)*
Not Applicable
- 4.12 Proficiency criteria are explicitly described in course descriptions per Board Rule R277-700-3.
Partially Met
- See 4.1 above and comments at conclusion of standard.*
- 4.13 The school assesses English acquisition using annual measurable achievement objectives.*
Not Applicable

*Do not necessarily apply to non-public schools.

Comments of the Visiting Team – Assessment Standard

The Visiting Team found, for those indicators listed above as “Partially Met” (4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.6, 4.7, 4.9, and 4.12) that the staff, through continued professional development, will be enabled to continually improve the assessment process. Assessments are aligned with the required knowledge, skills, and performance data for student learning. As the staff continues on the path of continuous improvement, staff members intend to review their assessments and work toward the establishment of valid and common assessment tools.

Assessments are geared toward teacher expectations, with a school-wide variety of assessment modalities. The information provided by the assessments used enables the teacher to determine whether students have learned the specific skill, and adjust instructional strategies as needed.

It seems that assessments are unbiased and targeted to individual needs in order to provide fair access to successful academic outcomes.

CHAPTER 3: NAAS SCHOOL SUPPORT STANDARDS

5. LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

Guiding Principle: The way in which a school organizes learning for students, fosters leadership, and engages its members has a profound effect on teaching and learning. The professional culture of the school must be characterized by thoughtful, reflective, and constructive discourse about decision-making and practices that support student learning and well-being.

- 5.1 The academic administrator has sufficient autonomy and decision-making authority to lead the school in achieving the mission, beliefs, and DRSLs.

Partially Met

The academic administrator has sufficient autonomy and decision-making authority, but the ownership needs to provide him with a consistent and sufficient annual budget for effective operating purposes.

- 5.2 The academic administrator provides leadership in the school community by creating and maintaining a shared vision, direction, and focus for student learning.

Substantially Met

- 5.3 The student-to-academic administrator ratio does not exceed 450 students to each qualified administrator or prorated fraction thereof.

Substantially Met

- 5.4 Staff members, as well as administrators other than the academic administrator; provide leadership essential to the improvement of the school.

Substantially Met

- 5.5 Excessive staff turnover does not impact school effectiveness. The school evaluates staff turnover and addresses any concerns about staff retention.
Substantially Met
- 5.6 The organization of the school and its educational programs promote the achievement of the school's mission, beliefs, and DRSLs.
Substantially Met
- 5.7 Student grouping patterns reflect the ethnic diversity of the student body, foster heterogeneity, reflect current research and best practices, and support the achievement of the school's mission, beliefs, and DRSLs.
Substantially Met
- 5.8 The schedule is driven by the school's mission, beliefs, and DRSLs and supports the effective implementation of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
Substantially Met
- 5.9 Meaningful roles in the decision-making process are accorded to students, parents, and all members of the school staff to promote an atmosphere of participation, responsibility, and ownership.
Substantially Met
- 5.10 There is a formal system through which each student has an adult staff member who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school-wide expectations for student learning.
Substantially Met
- 5.11 The professional staff members collaborate within and across departments or grade levels in support of learning for all students.
Partially Met
- There is a need for greater teacher collaboration within and across departments and grade levels.*
- 5.12 All school staff members are involved in promoting the well-being and learning of students.
Substantially Met
- 5.13 Student success is regularly acknowledged, celebrated, and displayed.
Substantially Met
- 5.14 The climate of the school is safe, positive, respectful, and supportive resulting in a sense of pride and ownership.
Substantially Met
- 5.15 The school has a written code of student conduct.
Substantially Met

5.16 Teacher supervision and evaluation processes are used to improve instruction.
Substantially Met

5.17 The academic administrator is significantly involved in the selection, assignment, and retention of instructional personnel.
Substantially Met

5.18 The school employs adequate staff, both professional and non-certified, to support student enrollment and to realize its stated purposes.
Partially Met

The teacher-student ratio is very commendable, but there is a need for all staff members delivering instruction to be licensed and endorsed in their respective areas.

5.19 The school meets all applicable state requirements and regulations for licenser, organization, academic administrators, and control, unless state authorities have granted official exemption.
Partially Met

See 5.18 above.

Utah-Specific Indicators—Leadership and Organization Standard

5.20 The school has a written policy prohibiting discrimination, and regular training is provided to ensure compliance in accordance with Board Rule R277-112-3-C.
Substantially Met

5.21 The school has a written policy explaining the process and standards for acceptance and reciprocity of credits earned by students in accordance with Board Rule R277-705-3.
Substantially Met

5.22 Teachers have reviewed and are familiar with the *Life Skills: A Guide to Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions for Success* document and implemented them into the curricula they are teaching.
Substantially Met

6. SCHOOL SERVICES

Guiding Principle: Student learning and well-being are dependent upon adequate and appropriate support programs and services. The school is responsible for providing an effective range of integrated resources to enhance and improve student learning and well-being and to support the school's mission and expectations.

Student Support Services

- 6.1 The school's student support services are consistent with the school's mission, beliefs, and DRSLs.

Substantially Met

- 6.2 The school allocates resources, programs, and services so that all students have a reasonable opportunity to achieve the school's expectations for student learning.

Partially Met

It was apparent to the Visiting Team that a budget that is fair and consistently administered is needed on an annual basis so the principal can effectively plan and operate the total education program at Sorenson's Ranch School.

- 6.3 Student support personnel enhance student learning by interacting and working cooperatively with professional and other staff members, and by utilizing community resources to address the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of students.

Substantially Met

- 6.4 All student support services are regularly evaluated and revised as needed to support improved student learning.

Partially Met

More effort is needed to establish a consistent and valid assessment program for all students.

- 6.5 All professional personnel are in compliance with the Utah Educator Licensing requirements and are appropriately endorsed for all assignments in accordance with Board Rule R277-501.

Partially Met

The Sorenson's Ranch School must work diligently to see that ALL professional personnel are in compliance with the Utah Educator Licensing requirements and are appropriately endorsed for all assignments. Paraeducators must be under the direct supervision of licensed teachers.

- 6.6 The total number of students instructed by any one teacher does not exceed 160.

Substantially Met

- 6.7 There is a system for effective and ongoing communication with students, parents/guardians, and school personnel, designed to keep them informed about the types of available student support services and identified student needs.

Substantially Met

- 6.8 Student records, including health and immunization records, are maintained in a confidential and secure manner consistent with federal (FERPA) law.

Substantially Met

- 6.9 All teachers are given appropriate orientation training.
Substantially Met
- 6.10 Teachers are carefully supervised by the academic administrative staff.
Substantially Met
- 6.11 The non-professional clerical and paraprofessional staff members are carefully selected and have appropriate training and background for their position.
Substantially Met
- 6.12 Policies for the selection and assignment of personnel are non-discriminatory in reference to race, ethnic origin, and sex.
Substantially Met

Utah-Specific Indicators—Student Support Services

- 6.13 All school employees have been instructed regarding their responsibilities and follow required procedures in cases of suspected child neglect and physical or sexual abuse in accordance with Board Rule R277-401-3.
Substantially Met
- 6.14 The school communicates to parents/guardians all assessment practices used by teachers in the preferred language of the parents and facilitates direct involvement in their children's education (i.e., English as a second language programs, English literacy programs, homework programs and home assessment tools).
Substantially Met

Guidance Services

- 6.15 The school provides a full range of comprehensive guidance services, including:
- a. Individual and group meetings with guidance personnel.
Substantially Met
 - b. Personal, career, and college counseling.
Partially Met
Students feel more effort is needed in career and college counseling efforts on their behalf.
 - c. Student course selection assistance.
Substantially Met
 - d. Appropriate support in the delivery of special education services for students, as applicable.
Substantially Met
- 6.16 The ratio of students to those who provide guidance and counseling services does not exceed 400 students to one of those respective individuals.
Substantially Met
- 6.17 The guidance service facilities are large enough to house program personnel,

equipment, and material. (Counseling spaces should be easily accessible to all students, equipped with offices for each professional school counselor, installed telephones, computer connections, etc.)

Substantially Met

Utah-Specific Indicators—Guidance Services

- 6.18 The Comprehensive Guidance Program (Board Rule R277-462) reflects the school's mission, beliefs and DRSLs.*

Not Applicable

- 6.19 School counselors can provide evidence that the Comprehensive Guidance Program is contributing to student achievement.*

Not Applicable

* Do not necessarily apply to non-public schools.

Health Services

- 6.21 The school has a current health service plan providing resources to meet the needs of all the students.

Substantially Met

- 6.22 The school has a crisis response plan that is tested and updated annually as outlined in Board Rule R277-400.

Substantially Met

Library Information Services

- 6.23 The library media program is directed by a certified library media specialist.
- a. Library staff members in schools of fewer than 250 students need not be certified, but are under the direction of a qualified library media specialist.
 - b. Schools with an enrollment between 250 and 500 students have a full-time qualified library media specialist.
 - c. Schools with more than 500 students have a full-time library media specialist and have additional library media personnel.
 - d. Personnel are under the direction of a qualified library media specialist.
- Substantially Met

Sorenson's Ranch School is fortunate to have a certified library media teacher to direct its library program.

- 6.24 Students, faculty, and support staff have regular and frequent access to library/information services, facilities, and programs as an integral part of their educational experience before, during, and after the school day.

Substantially Met

- 6.25 The library/information services program fosters independent inquiry by enabling

students and faculty to use various school and community information resources and technologies.

Substantially Met

- 6.26 The school has a written policy concerning the selection and removal of information resources and the use of technologies and the Internet.

Substantially Met

Utah-Specific Indicator—Library Information Services

- 6.27 The library collection and information resources are relevant, up-to-date and of sufficient size (10 volumes per student) to meet the program of curricular and literacy needs of the students and faculty.

Substantially Met

Special Education Services

- 6.28 The school provides special education services related to the identification, monitoring, and referral of students in accordance with local, state, and federal laws, as applicable.

Substantially Met

Family and Community Services

- 6.29 The school engages parents and families as partners in each student's education as appropriate to the school's program.

Substantially Met

- 6.30 The school fosters productive business/community/higher education partnerships that support student learning appropriate to the school's program.

Substantially Met

Comments of the Visiting Team – Student Support Services Standard

See comments above regarding individual indicators.

7. FACILITIES AND FINANCES

Guiding Principle: The school plant (consisting of site, buildings, equipment, and services) is an important factor in the functioning of the educational program. The school plant serves as a vehicle for the implementation of the school mission. The school plant should provide for a variety of instructional activities and programs and for the health and safety of **ALL** persons. The school plant should incorporate aesthetic features that contribute to a positive educational atmosphere while providing for needed flexibility. In addition to an appropriate facility, sufficient fiscal resources must be available, accounted for and effectively used in order for any school to accomplish its mission and expectations for student learning.

- 7.1 The school site and plant support and enhance all aspects of the educational program and the support services for student learning.
Substantially Met
- 7.2 The physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations.
Substantially Met
- 7.3 Equipment is adequate, properly maintained, catalogued, and replaced when appropriate.
Substantially Met
- 7.4 A planned and adequately funded program of building and site management ensures the appropriate maintenance, repair, and cleanliness of the school plant.
Substantially Met
- 7.5 There is ongoing planning to address future programs, enrollment changes, staffing, facility, and technology needs as well as capital improvements.
Substantially Met
- 7.6 Faculty and building administrators have active involvement in the budgetary process, including its development and implementation, where applicable.
Partially Met
- The owners should provide a clearly defined annual operating budget to the school's principal so he may plan and administer the budget and discretionary budget in meeting the diverse needs of the educational program at Sorenson's Ranch School.*
- 7.7 The school has sustainable financial resources to provide services to students to meet the stated purposes of the school and to provide the educational program to the student.
Substantially Met
- 7.8 Proper budgetary procedures and generally accepted accounting principles are followed for all school funds.
Substantially Met
- 7.9 The school's accounts are independently audited annually.
Substantially Met
- 7.10 The total cost for a course of instruction, including all textbooks, materials, and instructional services, is made known to parents at the time of their application and/or registration, where applicable.
Substantially Met
- 7.11 Terms of tuition and/or fees payment are clearly defined in the application, where applicable.

Substantially Met

- 7.12 Any advertising and promotional literature is completely truthful and ethical.
Substantially Met

- 7.13 Any advertising and promotional literature clearly states the purpose of the school's program of instruction.
Substantially Met

- 7.14 None of the school's advertising and promotional literature is offensive or negative toward other schools or educational agencies.
Substantially Met

- 7.15 Tuition collection procedures are in keeping with sound and ethical business practices and protect the financial interest of the school, where applicable.
Substantially Met

- 7.16 The administration has the authority to administer its discretionary budget, where applicable.
Partially Met

The owners of Sorenson's Ranch School should provide the school administration with a clearly defined budget that will identify and meet the diverse needs of the students' educational program.

Comments of the Visiting Team – Facilities and Finance Standard

As identified and noted at various places in this report, there is a real need for the owners and administration of Sorenson's Ranch School to work together to establish fiscal policy and clearly outlined annual budgets to address the needs of the school and its students.

CHAPTER 4: NAAS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STANDARD

8. CULTURE OF CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

Guiding Principle: A quality school develops and maintains an externally validated process and plan for school improvement. Goals resulting from the evaluation process should include targeted levels of achievement and be measurable.

- 8.1 The school has developed and implemented a comprehensive school improvement plan using *Collaborating for Student Achievement*, the Utah accreditation school improvement process that is reviewed and revised on an ongoing basis.
Substantially Met

- 8.2 Results of school improvement are identified, documented, used, and

communicated to all stakeholders.

Partially Met

There is a need for the development of valid and reliable assessment data to aide in the adjustment of instructional strategies to support greater student achievement.

- 8.3 The school improvement effort is externally validated on a periodic basis by an onsite accreditation visiting team.

Substantially Met

- 8.4 The school improvement plan is consistent with external accountability requirements such as those of the state in which the school is located. These could also be ministry or federal accountability requirements.

Substantially Met

- 8.5 The school improvement process provides an orderly process for:
- a. Selecting the most appropriate areas upon which to focus improvement efforts.

Substantially Met

- b. Developing strategies that are designed to improve student performance.

Partially Met

- c. Implementing those strategies.

Partially Met

- d. Monitoring the process.

Partially Met

- e. Evaluating the process to ensure that success has been attained.

Partially Met

See indicator 8.2 above.

- 8.6 The school improvement process is the result of a school self-evaluation that addresses the major recommendations for improvement as identified in the self-study.

Substantially Met

- 8.7 Goal statements for the school improvement process are properly aligned with the implementation plan and clearly identify measures of success.

Partially Met

There is a need to redesign the format and layout of the action plan shown in the self-study. Objectives and roles need to be more clearly defined and outlined using a grid model.

In addition, there is a need to identify the data to be collected, assessed, and used, to improve student learning and achievement.

- 8.8 A reasonable, specific timeline for the implementation of each area within the school improvement process is identified.

Substantially Met

- 8.9 The school improvement process involves a site-based council or advisory committee.

Substantially Met

Utah-Specific Indicator—Culture of Continuous Improvement Standard

- 8.10 The school incorporates the recommendations from the external evaluation (Report of the Visiting Team) into its school improvement plan.

Substantially Met

Comments of the Visiting Team – Continuous Improvement Standard

See comments above addressing specific indicators.

CHAPTER 5: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

As result of the on-site visit, the Visiting Team determined that there were commendations regarding the school and program, and also some recommendations for the school staff and administration to consider during the next years of accreditation. These follow and represent both general impressions and some that are specifically related to the Core Standards for Accreditation. The school should make every effort to review each commendation and recommendation and put into place plans for celebration and/or prioritization for school improvement. The school is expected, as part of its annual report, to account for its progress toward achieving those recommendations as prioritized in the school's improvement plan.

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends the Sorenson's Ranch School for the competent, certified (with some exceptions) and caring faculty who work well with the at-risk student population. The teachers are to be commended for their positive use of one-to-one instruction, peer tutoring, and flexible approach in assisting students to succeed with credit attainment.
- The Visiting Team commends the owners of Sorenson's Ranch School for employing a full-time, on-site principal who is competent and enthusiastic, and who possesses a vision for the improvement of the overall education program at Sorenson's Ranch School.

- The Visiting Team commends the educational staff for individualizing each student's educational program by creating a valid IEP that can be successfully tracked and monitored.
- The Visiting Team commends Sorenson's Ranch School for promoting a strong collaboration between the faculty and the therapeutic staff in assisting students to meet their personal and educational goals.
- The Visiting Team commends Sorenson's Ranch School for assisting students to take advantage of ACT and SAT test-taking opportunities.
- The Visiting Team commends the educational staff for its commitment to assisting students in changing their negative attitudes toward school, in general, to a positive "can do" attitude.
- The Visiting Team commends the strong efforts extended in notifying parents, on a regular basis, of students' individual progress.
- The Visiting Team commends Sorenson's Ranch School for the valued emphasis placed on the positive slogan "Conduct Always Matters," which provides a positive climate within the school.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that a greater collaboration amongst school departments occur to create integrated, relevant and authentic learning opportunities for students.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the Sorenson's Ranch School owners and administrators increase overall efforts for group professional development opportunities for teachers to support research-based instructional practices.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Sorenson's Ranch School increase marketing efforts to celebrate the mission of the school and its beliefs by posting quality signs depicting those worthy intentions.
- The Visiting Team recommends that school leaders and teachers work toward the goal of mapping the curriculum in order to reach the objectives of the Core Curriculum, and that all instructors make consistent and continual improvements to the curriculum in their content areas.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the owners of Sorenson's Ranch School develop an annual, established education budget that is fair and is consistently administered so that the school administration can effectively operate the total school operation and facilitate a long-range planning process.

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school administration and other key personnel establish valid and reliable entry and exit assessment strategies to assist in the development of effective instructional practices to facilitate student academic growth.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school staff develop ways to align the DRSLs more closely with the overall curriculum and educational program.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the Sorenson's Ranch School staff find methods to use their collected data in more effective and meaningful ways as a tool to improve the quality of the education provided to students. In addition, it is recommended that data collection and the use of data be continued in setting the course of action for Sorenson's Ranch School.